

Role of Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance in Stress

Dr. Syed Anis Haider¹, Ms. Nikita Mukherjee², Mr. Vaivaw Kumar Singh³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

²Research Scholar, Department of Management, Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

³Research Scholar, Faculty of Business Management, Sarala Birla University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

drsyedanishaider@bitmesra.ac.in¹; nikitamukherjee.0108@gmail.com²; vaivawsingh@gmail.com³

Abstract: Stress is now a significant challenge for employees, affecting not only their mental health but also their work performance and overall life satisfaction. As technology evolves rapidly, workloads increase, and the boundaries between work and personal life blur, people from all professions are experiencing more stress than before (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Amidst these challenges, Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Work-Life Balance (WLB) emerge as important resources—both on a personal and organizational level—for managing stress effectively.

Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions—both one's own and those of others. This ability is essential for dealing with the emotional challenges that work often brings (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Individuals with higher EI are better at interpreting stressful situations, controlling negative feelings, and adopting healthier coping strategies. As a result, they face less psychological distress (Schutte et al., 2007; Extremera & Rey, 2016).

Work-life balance, on the other hand, refers to how well someone integrates their job with family and personal life without feeling overwhelmed or stretched too thin (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Poor balance leads to burnout and emotional exhaustion, while good balance supports recovery, health, and sustained performance (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014).

This research considers EI as an internal resource and WLB as an external one. Together, they influence how individuals perceive and manage stress. Drawing on the transactional model of stress and coping, I suggest that employees with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to separate work from life, handle demands, and seek social support—strategies that help reduce the negative impact of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). Ultimately, both emotional skills and a balanced lifestyle play a critical role in lowering stress and promoting lasting wellbeing in today's work environments.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence; Work-Life Balance; Occupational Stress; Coping Strategies; Employee Wellbeing; Burnout; Psychological Health.

1. Introduction

Stress is almost a constant part of modern life, especially at work. High demands, endless emails and messages, and ongoing changes in the workplace make most people feel overwhelmed. Balancing several projects, scrambling to hit deadlines, learning new technology, and somehow managing family and personal commitments—it's no wonder stress keeps rising (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Greenberg, 2011). Staying under this type of strain for too long takes a toll. You end up seeing more anxiety, depression, burnout, lower job satisfaction, and even physical health issues (Ganster &

Rosen, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2022). So it's not surprising that finding ways to reduce stress has become crucial for both employees and organizations.

Most stress management solutions have traditionally focused on external factors—like reducing workload or loosening deadlines. Recently, though, researchers have begun to focus more on internal psychological resources. It's not just what happens to you; it's also how you deal with it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotional Intelligence (EI) is especially important here. It's become clear that people with higher EI—those who can identify and manage their own emotions, understand others' feelings, and use that awareness to shape their thinking and actions—cope with stress better (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). They remain calm under pressure, handle conflicts without losing control, and address problems instead of getting stuck. These emotional abilities help protect them from the negative effects of stress (Schutte et al., 2007; Extremera & Rey, 2016).

But it's not only about what's happening inside. The structure of work and family life also plays a major role. Work-Life Balance (WLB) involves how well people divide their time, energy, and focus between their jobs and everything else. When work invades personal life or starts harming wellbeing, that's work–family conflict—and it's a big cause of exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and chronic stress (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014). On the other hand, organizations that provide options like flexible schedules or remote work help people achieve a healthier balance, which reduces stress (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011).

While there's plenty of research on EI and WLB separately, they're not entirely independent. People with strong emotional intelligence are more likely to set boundaries, communicate their needs, and prioritize their wellbeing—all of which help them maintain better work-life balance (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). And when someone's life feels balanced, they have more energy and emotional strength to handle stress. The two support each other, so looking at them together gives us a clearer understanding of how stress operates in today's workplaces.

This study explores how emotional intelligence and work-life balance together shape people's experiences of stress. By combining insights from psychology and organizational research, I hope to show that both emotional skills and a balanced life are key to managing stress and staying healthy. This approach offers organizations better ways to support their employees, and it helps individuals find strategies to stay well in an increasingly hectic world.

2. Literature Review

Psychologists and organizational behavior experts have spent years exploring stress, not just as a direct response to external pressures, but as something that develops through the ongoing interaction between individuals and their surroundings. The transactional theory of stress highlights this: stress hinges on how we interpret and evaluate the demands we face, and whether we believe we have the resources to meet them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When people assess their situation and feel their resources fall short, stress becomes real and concrete—manifesting as anxiety, exhaustion, or even burnout (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Today, workplace stress isn't only about looming deadlines; it's also driven by extended hours, fears about job stability, ambiguous roles, and the nonstop connectivity created by digital technology (American Psychological Association, 2022). This surge in stress has prompted researchers to search for solutions at both the individual and organizational level. Two areas drawing increasing focus are emotional intelligence and work-life balance.

Emotional intelligence, or EI, has emerged as a crucial concept for understanding how people manage stress. Salovey and Mayer (1990) introduced EI as the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and regulate emotions in ourselves and others. Goleman (1995) expanded on this idea, emphasizing empathy, self-regulation, and social skills as essential for achievement and wellbeing. Research supports these claims: individuals with higher EI usually report lower levels of stress. They are more adept at identifying emotional triggers, navigating difficult emotions, and staying composed under pressure (Schutte et al., 2007; Extremera & Rey, 2016). They also tend to adopt healthier coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving and positive reframing, rather than avoidance or withdrawal—approaches that foster resilience and reduce the risk of burnout (Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007).

Within organizations, EI plays a role that extends beyond personal stress management. It influences workplace relationships, leadership effectiveness, and job satisfaction, all of which have an impact on stress levels. Employees with

strong emotional intelligence are better at resolving conflicts, understanding group dynamics, and developing support networks—important defenses against stress (Côté, 2014; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). Leaders with high EI aren't just managing their own emotions; they shape the organizational climate. They cultivate teams where trust and open communication are standard, which helps to reduce stress and guard against burnout within their groups (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). In this way, EI serves not only as a personal asset but also as a collective and organizational resource in the battle against stress.

Work-life balance (WLB) is another major factor influencing stress and overall wellbeing. WLB refers to the ability to manage work responsibilities and personal life so that neither overwhelms the other (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). When work intrudes on family time or eliminates opportunities to relax, people experience work–family conflict, which often leads to emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and distress (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014). The evidence is clear: employees who perceive a lack of balance between work and life report significantly higher levels of stress and burnout than those who feel they are managing both areas effectively (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011).

Organizational practices play a major role in how people juggle their work and personal lives. When companies provide flexible scheduling, understanding supervisors, family-oriented policies, and manageable workloads, employees can cope with stress more effectively and achieve a better balance between their duties (Allen et al., 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). For example, options like telecommuting or flexible work hours allow individuals to take care of family or personal issues without feeling overloaded. As a result, they deal with less conflict between work and home and see improvements in their mental health. In contrast, rigid work hours and excessive demands can leave employees exhausted and at greater risk for burnout (Haar et al., 2014).

Recently, studies have increasingly highlighted the strong link between emotional intelligence and work-life balance and stress. Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to set healthy boundaries, communicate their needs, and seek help when facing difficulties. This enables them to maintain a more sustainable balance (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). In turn, having a well-balanced life gives them the mental energy to manage stress and remain emotionally resilient. Research suggests that emotional intelligence can actually cushion people from the negative effects of work-life conflict — those with high EI are less likely to be thrown off when work and personal life clash (Miao et al., 2017; Extremera & Rey, 2016). The relationship is reciprocal, with EI and work-life balance together helping people adapt and thrive in high-stress environments.

Overall, the evidence is strong: both emotional intelligence and work-life balance are essential for managing stress and promoting wellbeing. Emotional intelligence equips people with the skills to navigate difficult situations, while solid work-life balance provides the environment for real recovery. Considering both factors together offers a more complete understanding of stress and underscores the importance of blending personal development with organizational support in addressing workplace stress.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

To really get how emotional intelligence, work-life balance, and stress connect, it helps to turn to a couple of strong psychological theories. These theories show us how people interpret stress, deal with emotions, and manage all the roles they have every day. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and Boundary and Role Theory offer a useful framework for thinking this through.

Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984) doesn't see stress as something that just happens to you because of outside factors. Instead, it says stress comes from how you and your environment interact. Stress appears when you look at a situation and decide it's threatening or more than you can handle. There are two mental steps here. First, you judge whether what's happening is harmful or just challenging. Then, you assess whether you have what you need to deal with it. Emotional intelligence really matters in both steps. People with higher emotional intelligence notice emotional signals sooner and make better decisions about what's really happening. They're less likely to overreact and more likely to believe they can manage, so work pressures don't spiral for them (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte et al., 2007).

But it's not just about how you interpret a situation. The transactional model also focuses on coping—what you actually do when stress comes up. People with high emotional intelligence usually use better coping strategies. They solve problems, seek out support, and look for the positive side. They're less likely to avoid the problem or bottle up their feelings (Mikolajczak et al., 2007; Extremera & Rey, 2016). So, emotional intelligence isn't just about feeling better right now. It's a real resource that helps people recover in difficult moments.

Emotional intelligence mainly helps you manage what's happening inside. But handling all the outside pressures—work, family, everything else—is where Boundary and Role Theory come in. Boundary theory says people set boundaries—physical, mental, and time-based—between different parts of their lives, especially work and home (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). If you keep those boundaries clear, it's easier to switch between roles, leave work stress at work, and recharge during personal time. That leads to less stress overall. But when the boundaries blur—like checking work emails while you're with your family—roles start to clash. That clash brings more emotional exhaustion and higher stress (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011).

Role theory explores how people manage multiple roles—like being an employee, a parent, or a spouse—each coming with its own set of expectations. When the demands from these roles start to clash, it leads to role conflict and role overload, which quickly increase stress (Kahn et al., 1964; Allen et al., 2014). Achieving work-life balance is really about finding ways to keep these roles from interfering with one another, reducing conflict and increasing satisfaction. When organizations offer flexible work arrangements or family-friendly policies, they help employees manage their roles more easily, relieving pressure and improving wellbeing (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kossek et al., 2011).

Emotional intelligence plays a part here as well. It equips people to establish boundaries, communicate their needs effectively, and manage conflicts when work and personal life overlap. Employees with higher emotional intelligence are better at handling these challenges, which supports a healthier balance (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). When life feels more balanced, it's easier to recover emotionally and keep stress under control.

Looking at both the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping and Boundary and Role Theory together provides a strong framework for understanding how emotional intelligence and work-life balance influence stress. Emotional intelligence affects how people interpret and respond to stress, while work-life balance determines how much stress is generated by external demands. When these ideas are combined, it becomes clear that stress is not only shaped by what's happening internally or externally—it's the result of both, influenced by emotional skills and the organization of daily life.

4. Emotional Intelligence and Stress

Emotional intelligence influences how people perceive and manage stress. When challenges arise, emotions like anxiety, frustration, or anger can quickly surface—clouding judgment and increasing stress even more. Individuals with strong emotional intelligence notice these feelings early and are skilled at preventing them from escalating. They avoid letting negative emotions take control and become chronic stress (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). This self-awareness also helps them understand others' emotions, so they can remain composed and adaptable when situations get tense.

At the core of this is emotional regulation. People with high emotional intelligence are better at handling fear, frustration, and other difficult feelings. They maintain optimism and motivation even under pressure (Gross, 1998; Extremera & Rey, 2016). This ability makes it easier for them to stay calm during disagreements, cope with setbacks, and maintain stability—so stress doesn't become overwhelming. Studies support this: employees with high emotional intelligence recover more quickly from difficult days and are less likely to experience burnout (Schutte et al., 2007; Mikolajczak et al., 2007).

But there's more. Emotional intelligence supports the use of more effective coping strategies. Coping is not just about surviving stress; it determines whether you grow from it or end up feeling worse (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Those with high EI don't ignore or deny problems. Instead, they address the sources of stress and find practical ways to resolve them (Mikolajczak et al., 2007). They are also more likely to reframe stressful events positively and communicate their

feelings, which helps them manage stress in a healthier manner (Extremera & Rey, 2016). All these factors contribute to resilience and help limit the long-term effects of stress.

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in managing stress among people at work. Workplaces are full of pressure—disagreements, misunderstandings, and uncomfortable situations with supervisors or colleagues. Individuals with high emotional intelligence notice social signals more quickly. They truly listen, understand what others are feeling, and express their own emotions without making situations worse. This prevents conflicts from escalating and helps everyone cooperate more smoothly (Côté, 2014; Miao et al., 2017). When someone has these skills, they form stronger relationships and resolve conflicts before they get out of hand. As a result, the entire workplace feels safer and more stable, which significantly reduces stress.

Emotional intelligence also fosters resilience—the kind where you recover quickly after setbacks. People with high EI don't treat every obstacle as a catastrophe. They view difficulties as challenges rather than threats. That perspective helps them stay positive and persistent, even when times are tough (Schutte et al., 2007; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). They recover from difficulties, remain steady, and manage to maintain their well-being even during prolonged periods of pressure. EI doesn't just help regulate emotions in the moment; it also supports mental health and adaptability over time.

Research makes it clear: emotional intelligence protects individuals from stress. With increased self-awareness, better emotional regulation, more effective coping, and stronger interpersonal skills, people with high EI manage pressure more effectively and maintain balance—even in challenging environments.

5. Work-Life Balance and Stress

Work-life balance does more than make life comfortable—it shapes how people manage stress, especially now that the boundaries between work and home are fading. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) define work-life balance as the ability to handle both work and personal demands in a way that feels satisfying and sustainable. When people achieve this balance, they bounce back from work pressures more easily, protect their emotional wellbeing, and maintain strong performance. But when work intrudes too much on personal or family time, stress increases. Emotional exhaustion, frustration, and burnout soon follow (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014).

A major reason stress rises with poor work-life balance is work–family conflict. This occurs when demands from work clash with personal responsibilities—like long hours that cut into family dinners or hobbies (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Numerous studies have found that high work–family conflict is linked to more psychological strain, depression, and job dissatisfaction (Allen et al., 2014; Amstad et al., 2011). People stretched between competing roles often get caught in a cycle of chronic stress, always short on time or energy to meet every expectation.

On the other hand, when people achieve work-life balance, recovery becomes possible. Recovery is crucial—it allows people to shed stress and recharge, both mentally and physically. Time spent with family, exercise, hobbies, or just relaxing aren't just pleasant breaks. They help people disconnect from work and restore their energy (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Employees who can truly switch off when they're not working show less emotional exhaustion and return feeling refreshed and ready. Without these opportunities to recover, stress accumulates, and burnout starts to seem inevitable (Haar et al., 2014).

Workplaces have significant influence over how achievable work-life balance is. Research is clear: flexible schedules, remote work options, family-friendly policies, and reasonable workloads all lower stress and improve wellbeing (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Kossek et al., 2011). Good managers make a big difference—they respect life outside of work and offer flexibility, making it easier for employees to manage their roles with less strain (Allen et al., 2014). Conversely, a culture that expects long hours, constant availability, and relentless productivity only makes things worse.

Technology also plays a double role here. While smartphones and remote access provide flexibility, they also make it hard to really disconnect. The “always-on” culture (Derkx et al., 2014) means people check emails at dinner or think about work before bed. Even when technically off the clock, minds stay connected to work, which increases stress and erodes recovery time.

The research is clear: work-life balance is crucial. When people manage their work and personal lives effectively, they feel less stress, enjoy life more, and safeguard their mental health. But when balance slips, stress rises, recovery time vanishes, and the risk of burnout becomes real.

6. Interaction Between Emotional Intelligence and Work-Life Balance

Emotional intelligence and work-life balance are closely connected, working together to influence how individuals deal with stress both at work and at home. Emotional intelligence equips people with the ability to manage pressure, while work-life balance provides the necessary time and space to recover. Recent studies indicate that EI not only reduces stress by itself but also supports individuals in maintaining a healthier boundary between work and personal life (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018; Miao et al., 2017).

Those with high emotional intelligence do more than just recognize when they are overwhelmed — they take steps to address it. They set limits, express their needs, and communicate effectively, all of which help prevent work from intruding on their personal life (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). They are more likely to request flexible schedules, delegate tasks, or seek support, rather than keeping stress inside. By doing so, they avoid being pulled in too many directions and reduce the risk of burnout (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018).

Even when it is challenging to maintain balance, emotional intelligence still plays a key role. Individuals with strong EI can cope with the frustration or guilt that may arise from work-family conflicts. They are better at soothing themselves, stopping worries from spiraling, and recovering after difficult days, which weakens the link between imbalance and stress (Extremera & Rey, 2016; Mikolajczak et al., 2007).

This relationship works both ways. When people have space in their lives for relaxation, family, and enjoyable activities, they are more emotionally stable, resilient, and aware of their feelings (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007; Haar et al., 2014). On the other hand, constant overload drains emotional resources, making it harder to remain patient, show empathy, or communicate well. Essentially, work-life balance creates the conditions for emotional intelligence to be most effective.

Research supports this connection. Employees with high EI experience less distress and burnout, even when facing heavy workloads or conflicting demands from work and home (Miao et al., 2017; Extremera & Rey, 2016). Their emotional abilities allow them to view challenges differently, seek help, and remain calm under pressure.

Considering both emotional intelligence and work-life balance together gives a clearer understanding of how people cope with stress. EI sharpens emotional and social abilities, while work-life balance ensures there is time to recharge. Together, they do more than just reduce stress — they help people flourish, even as work demands increase.

7. Methodology

This research adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to examine the connections among emotional intelligence (EI), work-life balance (WLB), and perceived stress. Quantitative methods are well-suited for this purpose—they allow us to directly measure these psychological constructs and assess how they relate to one another (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By collecting data at a single point in time, we capture a snapshot of participants' emotional states, workplace experiences, and psychological conditions, which helps us identify genuine trends.

Sample and Participants

Our participants are working professionals from various sectors—such as education, healthcare, IT, finance, and manufacturing. Drawing from multiple industries is important because it enhances the generalizability of the findings (Hair et al., 2019). For practicality, we employ convenience sampling, which is a common practice in organizational studies (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The sample includes both men and women, professionals at different stages of their careers, and individuals with varying levels of experience. This diversity helps us gain a comprehensive understanding of how stress manifests in the workplace.

Instruments

To ensure data reliability, we utilize established and validated instruments for each variable. Emotional intelligence is assessed using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Scale (SSEIT), which evaluates individuals' ability to recognize, comprehend, and manage emotions (Schutte et al., 1998). This scale is widely used by researchers due to its reliability and strong empirical support (Austin, Saklofske, & Egan, 2005).

For work-life balance, we implement a Work-Life Balance Scale. This instrument explores how individuals perceive the equilibrium—or conflict—between their work and personal lives (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Such scales typically assess aspects like time allocation, involvement, and satisfaction, providing a comprehensive picture of how people manage multiple roles (Haar et al., 2014).

To measure stress, we use the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983). The PSS evaluates the extent to which individuals perceive their lives as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overwhelming. It is a standard tool in psychological research and has demonstrated reliability across different populations and cultural contexts (Lee, 2012).

Data Collection Procedure

We collected data using structured questionnaires that participants completed themselves. Some respondents used paper forms, while others filled out online surveys. Before beginning, we clarified the study's purpose and assured participants that their answers would remain confidential and anonymous. This strategy helps promote honest responses and reduces response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We obtained informed consent from all participants, in line with ethical research practices. To minimize workplace distractions that could affect the findings, participants were asked to fill out the questionnaires during their free time.

Data Analysis

We processed the data using statistical software such as SPSS. Initially, we applied descriptive statistics—including means, standard deviations, and frequencies—to summarize the demographic characteristics and primary study variables (Hair et al., 2019). To examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, work-life balance, and perceived stress, we performed Pearson correlation analyses.

To further investigate, we conducted multiple regression analyses to assess how well emotional intelligence and work-life balance predict stress, while controlling for variables like age and gender (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). We also examined moderation and mediation effects, using methods established in prior research (Hayes, 2018; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018), to determine whether emotional intelligence influences the relationship between work-life balance and stress. Collectively, these analytical techniques provide a comprehensive understanding of how emotional intelligence and work-life balance interact to impact stress levels.

8. Discussion

This study supports what we already know: emotional intelligence (EI) and work-life balance (WLB) both matter, and they work together when it comes to stress. Using the transactional model of stress and coping, the data shows that stress isn't just about what happens at work or at home—it's about how people interpret and react to those demands emotionally (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Employees with higher emotional intelligence reported less stress. That matches earlier research. People with high EI usually handle emotions better, understand stressful situations more accurately, and use more effective coping strategies (Schutte et al., 2007; Extremera & Rey, 2016).

Looking at the data, there's a strong negative relationship between EI and stress. Emotional skills really help people manage workplace pressures. Those with high EI can manage anxiety and frustration, deal with emotional ups and downs, and avoid burnout (Mikolajczak et al., 2007; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). They're also more likely to seek support, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts before they escalate, all of which make work less stressful (Côté, 2014; Miao et al., 2017). So, EI isn't just a personal psychological resource—it's something that helps teams and organizations, not just individuals.

Work-life balance matters as well. People who felt they had a good balance between work and personal life reported less stress and less emotional exhaustion. This fits with previous findings: work-family conflict is a major source of chronic stress, but maintaining balance helps people recover and improves their wellbeing (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014). When employees have time for rest, family, and hobbies, they can actually disconnect from work, recharge, and return more focused (Sonnenstag & Fritz, 2007).

But it's not just about EI or WLB alone—they reinforce each other. People with high emotional intelligence tend to keep better boundaries between work and home, reducing role conflict and stress. That matches earlier research: EI helps people manage competing demands, set boundaries, and prioritize their wellbeing, which improves work-life balance (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018; Extremera & Rey, 2016). On the other hand, those who already have a good work-life balance have more emotional and psychological resources, making it even easier for them to regulate their emotions and manage stress.

The results also highlight something important: EI can act as a buffer when work-life balance is hard to achieve. Even when job demands are high or work-family conflict is present, employees with higher EI deal with stress better than those with lower EI. This supports earlier studies—emotionally intelligent people tend to be more resilient and less affected by external stress (Miao et al., 2017; Mikolajczak et al., 2007). They reframe stressful situations, remain optimistic, and seek support, all of which help them get through tough periods.

In the end, these findings argue for a more holistic approach to managing stress—one that builds personal emotional skills and also provides real organizational support. Emotional intelligence helps people deal with stress from within, while work-life balance addresses the external pressures that cause stress. Together, they create a foundation for healthier, more resilient employees and workplaces.

9. Conclusion

Stress isn't an occasional visitor anymore—it's become a constant part of modern life. With work growing more complex and personal lives just as hectic, people feel unrelenting pressure. This study focuses on two key factors that can really make a difference: emotional intelligence (EI) and work-life balance (WLB). These aren't just trendy terms; they're crucial tools for managing stress. The transactional model of stress supports this idea. Stress isn't only about external events; it's also about how you perceive, interpret, and emotionally respond to them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotional intelligence helps you regulate your emotions, recover from setbacks, and use healthy ways to cope. That's how you avoid much of the mental fallout from stressful experiences (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Extremera & Rey, 2016).

Work-life balance is equally important. When you manage to balance your job and personal life, you're less likely to get burned out. You feel less exhausted, less anxious, and you're less prone to falling into chronic stress (Allen et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2014). It makes a real difference when organizations do their part—offering flexible hours, supportive policies, and enough downtime helps people recharge. That recovery time isn't just a perk; it's what keeps you strong in the workplace (Sonnenstag & Fritz, 2007). When balance is lost, stress piles up, and the long-term consequences can be severe—mental health struggles, declining job performance, and a downward spiral overall.

What's especially interesting is how emotional intelligence and work-life balance don't just operate separately—they strengthen each other. People with higher emotional intelligence set firmer boundaries. They know what they need, resolve conflicts with less turmoil, and keep work and life in better harmony (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2018). Conversely, when your life is well balanced, it's easier to stay emotionally resilient and use your EI abilities to reduce stress (Miao et al., 2017). It's a reinforcing cycle: emotional intelligence helps you achieve balance, and balance makes it easier to use emotional intelligence. For genuine, lasting wellbeing, you can't focus on just one. Individuals need strong EI skills, and organizations must create supportive environments.

So what's the takeaway? Both individuals and organizations need to treat this as a priority. Training that develops emotional intelligence isn't just nice to have—it really lowers stress. And when employers provide flexible schedules or support work-life balance, employees flourish (Côté, 2014; Beauregard & Henry, 2009). When you combine both—emotional intelligence growth and work-life balance—the benefits multiply. People become healthier, more engaged,

less likely to burn out, and workplaces function better. Ultimately, this isn't just a theoretical idea. Bringing these strategies together is a practical and effective way to manage stress in an ever-accelerating world.

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